CLAIMS

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for certifying that e-mail sent from a computer is free from viruses identified by an anti-virus database, the method comprising:

scanning an e-mail for viruses before it is sent from the computer;

attaching a certificate identifying the e-mail as being scanned for viruses if no viruses are found during scanning; and

sending the e-mail with the certificate from the computer to a recipient computer.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the e-mail is created using a desktop mail application.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein sending the e-mail comprises sending the e-mail from a desktop computer.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein scanning the e-mail for viruses comprising scanning attachments contained within the e-mail.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein scanning the e-mail comprises automatically scanning the e-mail when a user sends the e-mail.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the computer is connected to the Internet.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the certificate includes a link to a web site describing the virus scanning performed on the e-mail.

8. The method of claim 1 further comprising adding a digital signature to the e-mail if no viruses are found.

9. The method of claim 8 further comprising receiving the e-mail at a recipient computer.

10. The method of claim 9 further comprising reading the digital signature with a digital signature verification application at the recipient computer and verifying that the e-mail has not been tampered with.

11. The method of claim 1 wherein the computer is a network server.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein attaching the certificate comprises attaching the certificate at the server.

13. The method of claim 11 wherein scanning the e-mail for viruses comprises scanning the e-mail for viruses at the server.

14. A method for certifying that content available on a host site is free from viruses identified by an anti-virus database, the method comprising:

scanning content configured for publication on a host site for viruses;

loading the scanned content onto the host site if no viruses are identified; and

displaying a certificate identifying the content on the host site as being scanned for viruses.

15. The method of claim 14 further comprising repeating scanning the content for viruses upon receiving an update to the anti-virus database.

16. The method of claim 15 further comprising removing the certificate from the host site if viruses are identified.

17. The method of claim 15 further comprising removing the content from the host site if viruses are identified.

18. The method of claim 14 wherein the host site is a web site on the Internet.

19. A system for certifying that e-mail sent from a computer is free from viruses identified by an anti-virus database, the system comprising:

an anti-virus application operable to scan e-mails;

a certification application operable to add a certificate to the e-mail identifying the e-mail as being scanned for viruses if no viruses are found during scanning; and

a storage medium configured to store the anti-virus database for use by the anti-virus application.

20. The system of claim 19 further comprising a processor operable to send the e-mail to a recipient computer.

21. The system of claim 20 wherein the computer sending the e-mail and the recipient computer are desktop computers.

22. The system of claim 20 wherein one of the computer sending the e-mail and the recipient computer is a handheld computer.

23. The system of claim 20 wherein the computer sending the e-mail and the recipient computer are servers located within a computer network.

24. The system of claim 19 wherein the certificate contains only graphical images.

25. The system of claim 19 wherein the certificate contains graphics and text.

26. The system of claim 19 wherein the certification application is further configured to attach a digital signature to the e-mail if no viruses are found.

27. A computer product for certifying that e-mail sent from a computer is free from viruses identified by an anti-virus database, the product comprising:

computer code that scans an e-mail for viruses before it is sent from the computer;

computer code that attaches a certificate identifying the e-mail as being scanned for viruses if no viruses are found during scanning;

computer code that sends the e-mail with the certificate from the computer to a recipient computer; and

a computer readable medium that stores said computer codes.

28. The computer product of claim 27 wherein the computer readable medium is selected from the group consisting of CD-ROM, floppy disk, tape, flash memory, system memory, hard drive, and a data signal embodied in a carrier wave.

29. The computer product of claim 27 further comprising computer code that cleans infected data.

30. The computer product of claim 27 further comprising code that attaches a digital signature used to verify that the e-mail has not been tampered with when received at a recipient computer if no viruses are found during scanning.

31. A computer product for certifying that content available on a host site is free from viruses identified by an anti-virus database, the product comprising:

computer code that scans content configured for publication on a host site for viruses;

computer code that loads the content onto the host site if no viruses are identified;

computer code that displays a certificate identifying the content on the host site as being scanned for viruses; and

a computer readable medium that stores said computer codes.

32. A system for certifying that content available on a host site is substantially virus free, the system comprising:

an anti-virus application operable to scan content for viruses; and

a certification application operable to display a virus free certificate on the host site and publish the content on the host site when the content is found to be virus free during scanning.

33. The system of claim 32 wherein the anti-virus application includes an anti-virus database containing a list of known viruses and wherein the anti-virus application is configured to automatically scan the content when the anti-virus database is updated.

34. A method for certifying that data transferred from a first computer to a recipient computer is free from viruses identified by an anti-virus database, the method comprising:

scanning data for viruses before it is sent from the first computer;

attaching a certificate identifying said data as being scanned for viruses if no viruses are found during scanning; and

sending said data with the certificate from the first computer to a recipient computer.

35. The method of claim 34 wherein the first computer and the recipient computer are in communication through an instant messaging application and wherein sending said data comprises sending an instant message.

36. The method of claim 35 wherein the instant message includes a file.

37. The method of claim 35 wherein scanning said data for viruses comprising scanning the file.

38. The method of claim 34 wherein scanning said data comprises automatically scanning said data when a user selects to send said data.

39. The method of claim 34 wherein the first computer and the recipient computer are connected to the Internet.

40. The method of claim 34 further comprising adding a digital signature to said data if no viruses are found.

41. The method of claim 40 further comprising reading the digital signature with a digital signature verification application at the recipient computer and verifying that said data has not been tampered with.